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PROTESTANTISM,

THE

PARENT AND GUARDIAN

OF

CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

A LECTURE,

DELIVERED, MARCH 26, 1843,

UNDER APPOINTMENT OF THE N. Y. PROTESTANT REFORMATION SOCIETY.

BY

REV. JOHN N. McLEOD, A.M.

PASTOR OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

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TO THE

REV. SAMUEL B. WYLIE, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,

AND

VICE PROVOST OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

Who, by his varied labors as a

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, A CHRISTIAN PASTOR, AND AN EXPOSITOR OF SCRIPTURE PROPHECY,

Has contributed largely to promote

THE CAUSE OF SOUND PROTESTANTISM IN OUR COUNTRY,

This Lecture

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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A L E C T U R E .

“And I saw another Angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.—And there followed another angel saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen.”—REV. xiv., 6, 8.

ON the nineteenth day of April, fifteen hundred and thirty-nine, an august assembly met in solemn deliberation in the city of Spires in Germany. It was composed of princes of the Germanic empire, and commissioners from its imperial cities. Its presiding officer was the brother, and representative of the Emperor Charles the Fifth; and there was present, also, a special legate of the reigning Pope, who took a prominent part in its proceedings.

The great subject under consideration was the *reform in religion*, which Luther and his coadjutors had been attempting for a few years past, and which now began to command universal attention.

The friends of reform who were members of the Assembly asked simply for toleration to the Reformers, in the maintenance

and expression of their conscientious opinions. The servants of Rome demanded their punishment as heretics and rebels; and the mere politicians, of whom there were several in the body, talked, and temporized, and sought postponement, until they should be able to determine whether their own selfish ends would be better answered, by a countenance of the new, or adherence to the old religion. At another meeting of this same assembly held a few years before, an act of toleration had been obtained in favor of Luther and his fellow Reformers. By this they had been delivered from the fear of immediate persecution, and were allowed to practise their religion in comparative safety. But the influence of Rome prevailed, as it has often done, before and since, over unprincipled politicians, and the proposition which is now before the assembly is, to revoke the act of the previous diet, and thus leave the Reformers to the penalties which the Pope had already denounced against them.

On the day before mentioned (*the nineteenth of April, 1539*) the act of toleration was revoked by a plurality of votes, and in its place another deliberately framed, of which the substance is as follows: that there should be no innovation in the established religion; no permission to abstain from the celebration of mass, or other ceremonies of the Roman Catholic worship; no public preaching against the doctrine and practice of the church; no publication through the medium of the press, in any way opposing the popish faith.

Against these iniquitous decrees, which were designed to nip the Reformation in the bud, six princes of the empire, and fourteen representatives of imperial cities entered their solemn PROTEST, and from this arose the name PROTESTANT—a name

which should be for ever dear to the Church of God, and the friends of human freedom, throughout the world.

There were indeed *protesters* against the corruptions and tyranny of Rome from the earliest ages. For every generation had its witnesses for God, and often had they sealed with their blood the testimony which they held. Let the Vaudois, the Albigenses, the Lollards, and the many distinguished individuals whose name and deeds are emblazoned, with letters of light, on the pages of the church's history, be held in everlasting remembrance! They kept the light of the true religion, which they had received from the primitive Christian Church, burning amidst the darkness of papal night, and at it the Protestant Reformers of the 16th century kindled their lamp. But while this admission is cordially made, it is still true that the name *Protestant*, as a formal designation of the opponents of Anti-Christ, had its origin in the historical fact to which we have just referred. And although it has been often treated as of little importance, it was undoubtedly of much consequence, as an element in the great moral revolution which was now commencing. Like the protests of the American colonies against the usurpations of the mother country, which prepared the way for the "Declaration of Independence"—the Protest of the German princes and deputies at the diet of Spire, contributed much to prepare the public mind for the final rejection of the papacy, by the Church of God, and her own independent re-organization on the Apostolic platform.

Liberty of conscience, of speech, and of the press, was the comprehensive claim of the Reformers, from the court of Rome.

Their claim was denied, they entered their protest ; and under its broad shield went forward to emancipate the nations.

The principles exhibited in the claim of the Reformers, and whose refusal by the papacy made them Protestants, are now regarded as axiomatic, and undeniable by all but Romanists themselves. But they involved heresy and rebellion against established authority when first promulgated ; and to give them the hold which they now have on the mind and heart of Christendom, cost years of painful effort, and the suffering, and bloody death of many thousands.

The anti-christian system claimed infallibility, and of course admitted no reform ; and such was the connection of the ecclesiastical and civil powers in that system, and the subserviency of the latter to the former, that to dissent from the Church was treason to the state. Against this vast and impious compound of irreligion and tyranny, the Reformers protested, at the peril of their lives. We, their posterity, are enjoying the blessed fruits of the tree which they planted, and it were ingratitude for us to forget their principles, or the price of blood which it cost to maintain them.

The question, therefore, which we now submit to your consideration is,

What is Protestantism ?

We bear the name of Protestants, and it behooves us to understand its import. To the inquiry What is Protestantism ? we shall now attempt a reply, by presenting four of its characteristic principles.

I. *It is a principle of Protestantism, that reform in the institu-*

tions and arrangements of society, both religious and civil, may be sought and effected in the use of the proper means.

The eternal Son of God in human nature is the only Mediator between God and man; and the Scriptures exhibit him as sustaining in that capacity a twofold relation to the universe. He is, first, the Head of the Church which is his body, and second, the Head over all other persons and things for her benefit.

As the Head of the Church, he is the fountain from which emanates all that is purely religious. And in this capacity he prescribes for man his faith, institutes the ordinances of his worship, and directs his obedience as an immortal sinful being, seeking the salvation of his soul.

But he is also the "Governor among the nations," and as such he claims the right of directing man, as a citizen of this lower world, in all his civil and political relations. So that the mediatorial government extends itself over the entire personal character and social relations of the human being.

The grand comprehensive charge, then, which as Protestants we bring against the papal system, is, that it is a profane usurpation of the mediatorial prerogatives. And in this consists its anti-christianism. The Roman pontiffs claim the Headship of the Church, and of all other persons and things on earth; and in this they appear as the embodied reality of that prophetic delineation of the "Man of Sin," which is given by the Apostle Paul, when he says, "He opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."—
2 THESS. ii., 4.

Thus it is that they have always declared themselves the

Sovereigns of the world, and assumed the power of elevating and degrading kings and emperors ; of working miracles ; dispensing indulgence for crime ; forgiving sin, and opening and shutting heaven at their pleasure. Hear their own language on this subject—" We, therefore," says Pope Boniface the Eighth, in his famous bull called " unam sanctam," " we therefore declare, say, define, and pronounce it to be necessary to salvation, that every human creature should be obedient to the Roman pontiff!!"

But the Head of the Roman Catholic Church is not satisfied with the assumption of universal sovereignty, he claims also *infallibility* in its exercise.

It is true that endless disputation has existed among the Romanists, as to the precise locality of the infallible power. But that it does exist somewhere in the system, is a universally received dogma. Their great standard writer Bellarmine, and the Jesuits as a body, place it in the hands of the Pope himself. The language of Bellarmine is, " the Pope cannot possibly err," and he adds, " if the Pope could err, by enjoining vices or prohibiting virtues, the Church would be bound to believe that vices were virtues, and virtues vices, unless she chose to sin against her conscience." And again, in the year 1625, when the Protestant reformation was just commencing, an assembly of cardinals and prelates, in France, made the following declaration : " His Holiness the Pope is above all calumny, and his faith out of the reach of error."

Combine this twofold claim of unlimited sovereignty over all persons and things, and of infallibility in its exercise, and we have the monstrous assumption of entire control over the liberty of man, in soul, body, and estate. An unalterable despotism

which there is no power to reform presents itself, and men are forbidden to say or to think that it is capable of improvement. Universal submission to this assumption presents the spectacle of a world in chains. And this was the actual condition of things when the Reformation commenced. "All maintained," says Myconius, a distinguished writer of that period, "that the Pope, being in the place of God, could not err, and there was none to contradict them." "All the world wondered after the Beast."—REV. xiii., 3, 4. And what was the personal and public character of this infallible head of an unalterable system? He was often ignorant, profligate, and impious in the very extreme. Take, as an example, the character of Alexander the Sixth, who was the reigning Pope in the age immediately preceding the Reformation. When the papal chair was vacated by the death of his predecessor, he was residing at Rome; and although he was an Archbishop, he was living in illicit intercourse with two females, the mother and daughter, at the same time. He obtained the papal throne by paying a stipulated sum in silver, to the cardinals who had the right of election. And soon after his elevation he ordered the marriage of one of his own daughters to be celebrated in the Vatican itself. His mistress was openly present, and the main amusements of the evening were the singing of licentious songs, and the acting of plays which ridiculed and travestied the most sacred subjects of scripture history! He distributed the dignities of the Church to his profligate favorites, or sold them for money. When it suited his purpose, he procured the murder of his enemies by the hand of the assassin, and finally ended his career of wickedness by unwittingly partaking of poison, which he had

directed to be prepared for another who was an invited guest at his table.* And if such was the character of the Head of the apostacy, profanely styled "His Holiness," it is not surprising that a general profligacy of manners should pervade all ranks. In Rome pagan, amidst all its abominable idolatries, nothing worse than what now presents itself in Rome papal, had ever appeared. At the beginning of the 16th century, the morals of the world were infamous.

And if such were the morals of Rome, what must have been its religion? It was a vain and deceptive substitute for the faith of Jesus Christ. The service of the Creator was forgotten in the idolatrous homage bestowed on the creature. The glory of the only Mediator was taken from him, to be given to saints, and angels, and pictures, and relics of dead men and things. The office of the Holy Spirit was virtually superseded by the penances, confessions, and payments of money which were made to secure the pardon of sin and purchase the favor of heaven; and that faith which sees Him that is invisible, which elevates the mind above worldly influences, and which manifests itself in regard for the truth, in humility of heart, in love to the brethren, and in all the other acts and exercises of unostentatious piety, had almost fled the earth.

It is true that God had some of his elect, even in the camp of the enemy. A people to come out of the mystical Babylon, when the voice should be heard proclaiming her approaching judgments. But they were like the spark amidst the ashes; not sufficient to warm, and enliven the mass itself, but enough,

* D'Aubigné's History, vol. i., pp. 52-55.

when separated from it, to kindle a lamp that would enlighten the world. Even upon the bosom of the ocean of anti-christian delusion and impiety in which a world was drowning, there was an ark floating, which contained a family, preserved in the mercy of God, and which would renovate the earth with a holy population.

The object which we have in view, in making this passing reference to the moral condition of the world at the commencement of the Reformation, is to show how much it needed reform, and at the same time display the mighty influence which opposed any attempts at its improvement. An infallible system, no matter how corrupt, admits of no reform, and therefore the first efforts of those who opposed the Papacy were necessarily employed in establishing their right to attempt, or even desire reform. To seek the improvement of everything that we consider wrong in Church or State, in the use of the proper means, we, in this Protestant country, feel to be our inalienable right. But such right was denied by the Church of Rome to our Protestant forefathers, and if we have it, it was purchased by their blood.

Reform was the grand watch-word of the Protestants, both before and after they adopted the name. At first, it was the scandalous lives of the clergy they sought to improve; and next, some of the more palpable and enormous of the existing corruptions in faith and practice, like the doctrine and sale of indulgences. But as they proceeded in their investigations, they found that the entire Popish system was rotten to the core; that it was essentially anti-christian, and therefore to be expelled as a disease, and banished as an enemy from the Church of Christ.

Thus, the grand moral revolution of the 16th century soon assumed the form, not merely of a movement of a few scattered individuals to correct abuses in a system which they regarded as radically good, but of the Church of God on earth, *re-forming* herself on the basis of her own apostolic and divine constitution.

The time was come when God required Reformers, not for the Papacy, for that is incapable of reform, but for the Church which it had corrupted, and the world it had enslaved. And He found them in the cells of the monasteries, the retirements of the mountains, and the high places of power.

Animated by influences from on high, the Reformers claimed the right, as members of organized society, to seek and obtain reform, in the use of the proper means. Antichrist denied the right, asserted his infallibility, and drew the sword to slay. The Protestants resisted. Their weapons were the tongue, the pen, and the press, which, about a century before, God had given to the world, for what purpose begins now to be more and more apparent. They were successful; and the right of men to reform themselves and others was at last established, though it cost the martyrdom of thousands.

The whole history of the Protestant world is proof of the existence of this right, and the value of its exercise. And we find it incorporated, either in express terms or by implication, in all forms of social organization.

No department of the Christian Church, no properly organized civil society, no voluntary association formed on Protestant principles, claims infallibility. The creeds of the several religious denominations admit imperfection and susceptibility of improve-

ment ; and it is the acknowledged right of every individual member in his appropriate place, and in the use of the means authorized by the gospel, to prosecute reform wherever he sees anything amiss.

And as it is in the Church, so also is it in the State. The institutions of our own Republic, whose foundations are laid on Protestant principles, take for granted the right of the citizen to seek reform, wherever he feels that it is required.

“Congress” (says the first amendment to the Federal Constitution) “shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Contrast this with the decree of the diet of Spire, which produced the protest of the German Reformers, and it will be found expressly guaranteeing the identical rights which are refused to the Protestants in that enactment. An undeniable evidence that our country is Protestant in its origin and principles of government ; and through the blessing of God, who reforms where he designs to save, it shall never change its character.

The right of reform includes the right of petition for the redress of personal grievances, and the correction of social evils, and they stand or fall together. Popery has always denied the right of the people to ask and obtain reform. When thousands of the friends of the true religion proclaimed her corruptions from age to age, she silenced them with brute force. When they pointed out to her the scandalous immoralities of her clergy, she punished them, as slanderers, with the sword. And when

they sought permission to live and act for themselves according to the word of God, she handed them over to the tender mercies of the infernal inquisition. And such is ever the spirit of Popery. How can infallibility be improved, or disobedience to "our Lord God the Pope" for a moment tolerated? It never is, where the physical power to enforce the claim is possessed.

In Protestant countries, it is true, the great aim of Popery is change. But it is such change as would conform everything to the model of its own unalterable despotism.

Popery degrades the rational being into a mere machine, to be moved as the infallible power directs. It renders man irresponsible and selfish. But Protestantism gives him his liberty, instructs him in his rights, puts in his hand the instrument of reform, and tells him to use it, when necessary, for the benefit of himself and others. It causes him to feel that he is a unit in the social system to which he belongs, and that he is bound to watch its operation, that he may guard what is right and seek the improvement of what is wrong. Thus is man elevated and ennobled. The right to reform may be abused by imperfect men into an inordinate passion for change; but under its proper restrictions, it is one of the grand safeguards of civil and religious liberty.

A purer atmosphere and a healthier population is found beside the ever-changing ocean, than that which surrounds the stagnant lake.

Protestantism, which is only another name for Christianity itself, instructs men that there is no perfection here, either in personal character or social institutions, and points them to a course of unlimited improvement. The true Protestant is an intelligent reformer.

II. *A second characteristic principle of Protestantism is that the Bible is the sufficient and only ultimate rule of faith and manners, and that it is the right and duty of all men to examine it for themselves.*

The grand object which Protestantism seeks is the reformation of the world. The means of effecting it, is the Bible in the hands of the entire population.

To conceal and mystify is a characteristic of Popery. To explain and understand everything which is capable of explanation, is the aim of Protestantism. And there is nothing which more distinctly evinces the anti-christian character of the Romish system, than the treatment it has always given to the oracles of God. From the day that God gave the first promise to man in Eden until the Apocalypse was bestowed to complete the canon of Scripture, he was *revealing* his will to the world. And when the revelation was completed, it was placed as the sun in the moral heavens to give light to all. "Search the scriptures, because in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they that testify of me," is the comprehensive instruction of the author of the Bible, John v., 39. And it is a fact in history pregnant with condemnation of the Papacy, that in proportion as true religion flourished in the first ages of Christianity, the Bible was free.

God directed the Church to set the candle of his most holy word upon a candlestick, "that it might enlighten every man that cometh into the house." A power arises with sufficient audacity to cover it with a bushel. That power is Popery. And that which thus buries, and hides from the world the lamp of eternal truth itself, must be Antichrist!

For at least two centuries after the close of the apostolic age, it is an undeniable fact, that the Scriptures were in the hands of all who had the means to procure them. They were publicly read in the religious assemblies of the people, and formed in the family, the text book of instruction. As, however, the Papacy rose into power, the Bible disappeared, until at last it became a sealed book, hidden in the cloisters and libraries, and of whose character multitudes even of the dignified clergy were entirely ignorant.

For many centuries before the Reformation, the Church of Rome gave little or no instruction from the Scriptures to the multitudes of her people. The public services of her religion were performed principally in an unknown language, and consisted, to a very great degree, in imposing ceremonies silently addressed to the outward senses. The rule of faith and manners was the will of the priesthood. After the invention of printing, devout and courageous men were found in various nations, who attempted the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular tongues, that all might read them ; but they were always opposed by the Romanists, who, when they had the power, burned both the books themselves, and the men who made them.

If the Roman Catholic Church in any nation, has ever allowed the translation of the Scriptures into the language understood by the people, as she has done in a few instances, it is because it was demanded by the force of a public opinion, which for the time being she felt to be too powerful to be resisted. And that public opinion was created by Protestant influence. Her translations are corrupt and defective. She has encumbered them with notes and comments, which form the authorized ex-

position of the text, and after all, they are only to be read by the express permission of the priesthood.*

Examine the condition of those countries of the globe where Popery has the ascendancy, and it will be found that they are almost literally without the word of God, except so far as they have received it from Protestant hands, and in spite of the papal prohibitions.

Luther, though he had been carefully instructed by his parents in the faith of Rome, and though he had been a student of the Academy and University for years, had never seen the Bible until he happened upon it one day in the library of Erfurth. He was then twenty years of age, and from the period that his hands took down the sacred volume from the shelves we may date the commencement of the Reformation in Germany. He took it down, not to return it unconsidered, but to feed his own faith upon its discoveries, and then give it to the world. It was the grand instrument of his Reformation. As an illustration of the gross ignorance which prevailed among the Romish clergy in Scotland, when the Reformation began to extend itself to that country, Buchanan informs us that severe laws were enacted against the reading of the New Testament, and that such was the blindness of the priests, that many of them maintained that it was a "dangerous book, lately written by Martin Luther!"

The characteristic principle of Protestantism with regard to the Scriptures and in opposition to all anti-christian substitutes is, that they are free to all men : as free as the atmosphere

* See Decrees of Council of Trent, rule 4th, concerning prohibited books.

or the light of heaven, of which each individual may appropriate his share, without injury to others.

Regarding every man as a rational and accountable being, standing on the ground of his own personal responsibility, Protestantism puts the Scriptures into his hands, that he may read and study them in his retirement, and deduce from them his own faith and stimulus to personal duty.

Considering men as social, Protestantism places the Bible on the family table, at its first organization, and says to its members, here is the precious volume that teaches the way to domestic happiness.

To the Church of God she presents it, as the grand charter of her security, the rule of her faith, the text-book of her instruction, the ultimate judge in her controversies, and the light which shows her members the way to a blessed immortality.

Nor is consistent Protestantism satisfied with limiting the teachings of the Bible to matters purely religious only, but she carries it to the school, the counting-room, the halls of legislation, the tribunal of justice, and the table of the statesman and politician, saying here is the rule of your duty: the only safe and adequate guide to personal and social prosperity.

God gave the Bible to man as a universal rule of faith and manners—he, in his folly and presumption, has more than once made the experiment of dispensing with its instructions, and the result is before the world. Popery made it on a grand and mighty scale; and the consequence was, that intellectual and moral darkness covered the nations, a cruel and inexorable despotism enslaved and degraded man, vice and immorality most fearfully prevailed, and imposture, fanaticism and selfish formality,

were substituted almost universally for the religion of the Son of God.

Modern France, throwing away the religion which had itself thrown away the Bible, made the same experiment, under the less covert form of open infidelity, and the result is written with letters of blood on the pages of her revolutionary history.

Let our own country beware how she tries a similar experiment, by allowing either Popery or infidelity to carry her off the only ground on which a republic can stand : the broad and safe ground of Bible morality.

III. *A third fundamental principle of Protestantism is, that all men have a right to personal and political freedom, while exercising their religion, and submitting to the restraints of righteous law.*

Man, even in his fallen condition, is disposed to religion. He feels that there is a God, and that he must do something to propitiate his favor. Satan, "the god of this world," saw that man must have a religion, and he gave him Paganism. When Paganism was overthrown in the Roman Empire by the power of Christianity, and the sagacious adversary saw that the true religion was in danger of triumphing, to the destruction of his own kingdom, he invented the papal corruptions, and imposed them on the world as the religion of the Son of God. Hence Paganism and Popery have always been among the main institutions of Satan's kingdom on our earth. Where Paganism prevails, civil liberty is a stranger; and wherever Popery has the ascendancy, man is a slave.

To control a man's religion, is to control his entire person ;

and it was the grand masterpiece of Popery to take hold of man's religious susceptibilities, and forge them into an iron chain, which would fetter him to the foot of its own despotic throne.

Popery, as we have already seen, usurps the government of the nations, that grand prerogative of the "only mediator." And hence it is a *civil tyranny*, prostituting religion to keep men indefinitely in political bondage. Look at the state of the world before the light of Protestantism began to break over its inhabitants, and the spectacle presents itself, of Princes, Kings and Emperors, bowing in subserviency to Rome; while the millions of their ignorant and degraded subjects were utter strangers to personal and political freedom.

God's great ordinance of civil government, designed by its author to promote his own glory, in the preservation of the peace and order of society, was absorbed in the compound despotism of the papacy. And the individual will of a single man, often ignorant, profligate, and impious in the extreme, was the rule of universal obedience.

We know that from age to age resistance was made, in various parts of the earth, to this inexorable usurpation. But it is also matter of history that such resistance was always met by the whole power of Rome. She drew the sword, and many tens of thousands were slain for evincing that they even wished to be free.

We cannot forget that it was the church of Rome which slaughtered the Waldenses, and Albigenses, and other Christians, before the Reformation, and the Huguenots of France, and Scottish and Irish Protestants, since that era of liberty. Inspired prophecy describes her, as the "woman drunken with the blood

of the saints," and the history of her cruelties is on record, both on earth and in Heaven.

"And I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice saying, how long, oh Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth."—REV. vi., 9, 10. Civil and religious liberty are twin sisters, and Christianity is the mother of both. Protestantism has released them together from the chains of Rome, and to it the world is indebted for all the civil and religious freedom it now enjoys. Just in proportion as the governments of the nations are imbued with the spirit of Protestantism they are free and prosperous. Compare Spain and Great Britain, Mexico and our own United States generally, and the lower department of Canada with New England, and it is Protestantism that makes them differ. And whence have come the liberty of conscience, of speech, and of the press; the written constitutions of civil government, which define the rights of the citizen, and the power of the ruler; the wholesome laws which give encouragement to industry; and all the other immunities of freemen by which our own country is distinguished? From Protestantism.

It was well and truly said by a venerable statesman,* on a recent occasion, "that it was a most propitious circumstance, that all the first settlers of the United States should have come from Protestant countries." And we have ourselves heard another

* Hon. Albert Gallatin, in his address to the New York Historical Society, 1843.

distinguished civilian* of our own State, in a public address, trace the origin of the declaration of American independence to the National Covenant of Scotland. Nor was it a mere flight of fancy. The Scottish Reformers from Popery had drunk deep at the fountains of Protestantism, as they had been opened on the continent of Europe, and especially in republican Geneva; or, rather, they had drunk along with the continental Reformers, at the same open fountain of God's word. They succeeded the Reformers of the continent in the movement against Antichrist, and had all the advantage of their lights. Their covenants were bonds of union among themselves, and public declarations of the grounds of their opposition to the anti-christian system, in all its parts. And they were distinguished, *first*, as connecting civil and religious liberty together in the definitions of rights which they made—and *second*, in combining all classes of the community in the effort to secure them.

As first formed, and afterwards renewed at various crises of their history, the National Covenant of Scotland was a declaration of the independence of the Church of Christ, as a distinct community from the State; and of both Church and State from all foreign control. It was subscribed by the mass of the people, as well as the privileged orders. And as ultimately embodied with additions, in the Solemn League and Covenant, it became the constitution of the British Empire. Under it, the Presbyterians of Scotland and the North of Ireland, the Puritans of England, of whom the majority were Presbyterians, and all

* Hon. Gulian C. Verplanck.

other Protestants who chose to receive it, united together in the strife for liberty, which had already commenced.

Charles the First is dethroned and executed. Despotism is rebuked, and great principles of civil and religious liberty are established ; while by this revolution a Protestant population, filled with the spirit of liberty, is scattered over the wilds of America. They increase and prosper, in the providence of God. They declare their independence of all foreign control, and take their place among the nations of the earth, as our own great Confederated Republic. During the excesses of the Commonwealth of England, which led to the temporary restoration of the house of Stuart, the Solemn League and Covenant was cast aside. But in the maintenance of its principles, Cameron, and Renwick, and a host of other holy martyrs, shed their blood, among the hills and glens, and upon the scaffolds of Scotland. Their legitimate successors, the “ Old Dissenters,” still hold it up before the world, and will not permit it to be forgotten.

Should the witnesses for God, who inhabit the British Isles, be called to a struggle with Antichrist, before his final downfall—as we believe they will—perhaps the banner of the Covenant will again float in the air, and form the rallying point of their efforts.

The history of Presbyterianism is yet to be written. When it is given to the world by a competent hand, it will be found to be the history of rational liberty.

The Puritans of England, the Scottish, and Irish, and Dutch Presbyterians, and the Huguenots of France, were the principal planters of these United States. Protestants laid the foundations of our Republic. Let them protect the superstructure it now so glo-

riously sustains. And let them remember, that if there is anything which is wrong, in constitutions or administrations (and doubtless there is much), the true Protestant is always a reformer.

IV. The fourth grand principle of Protestantism is, that a personal, spiritual religion is essential to the present well-being and eternal salvation of man.

The three former principles might all be admitted, and yet men remain infidels. They may believe in their right to reform, and yet attempt no reformation of their own bad hearts. They may claim the right of personal and political freedom, and yet remain strangers to that "liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free." They may admit that the Bible is the sufficient and only rule of faith and manners, and yet go to perdition with it in their hands! He, then, is not a true Protestant who is not sensible of the necessity of personal sanctification by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. And the highest charge which we are compelled to bring against the Roman Catholic system, is its impiety.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the grand announcement of the gospel. The faith demanded is a receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation. And it is a personal exercise of the mind. Christianity first individualizes the human being, and then tells him that his salvation depends, not on the intentions or acts of others, be they who they may, but on his own personal appropriation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour. And it tells him further, that this faith which he must personally exercise, and with which God has

been pleased to connect the salvation of the soul, is spiritual. Not the mere assent of the mind to the dogmas of a human creed, nor the yielding of its will to the direction of a human teacher, nor the submission of itself to a round of formal observances—but a loving, serving, and trusting God in Jesus Christ, through the aid of the sanctifying Spirit, for the forgiveness of sins, and a title to the celestial glory.

There are, indeed, forms in religion; for man has a body, through the medium of whose senses the soul is addressed. But attention to the mere forms of godliness can no more save the soul, than the going with the pitcher to the fountain can quench the thirst, while the water is neither drawn nor tasted.

Popery has corrupted the doctrine of the gospel. She has imposed on man a system of rites and ceremonies unknown to the Bible. She has given a saving efficacy to her forms, when employed by her priesthood with a right intention. And thus she has made the pardon of sin and enjoyment of heaven, commodities capable of being bought and sold by the sinful creature.

Therefore, the uniform tendency of the anti-christian system has been to make men either infidels or mere formalists, blindly devoting themselves to the observance of the appointed ceremonies, that in so doing they may secure heaven as their reward. Infidelity and gross superstition always have been, and always will be companions. "This fiction of Jesus Christ," said one of the Popes of Rome; "this fiction; how much we make by it!"

Let us look over the Roman world, at the period when the Reformation commenced, and it will be seen that covert infidelity or gross superstition prevailed almost universally. Many of the

priesthood, from the Pope to the lowest of his begging friars, were utterly irreligious men, who used their office and influence for mere selfish and worldly purposes. The kings and nobles employed the religion to whose support they contributed, as an engine of state policy, to perpetuate their despotism; and the mass of the people were the ignorant devotees of a cunningly devised and soul-destroying formalism. Spiritual religion—christian faith, had almost left the world.

As in times of old, there were indeed seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But like the spark of fire amidst the ashes, to which allusion has been already made, they were uninfluential and almost unknown. God the Holy Spirit stirred the ashes, for the time was come, and there was revival, light, and heat.

The Protestant Reformation, and this is its glory, was a *revival of spiritual religion in the earth.*

It has been attempted to be shown, that it was a mere political movement, made by the civilians of conflicting states against each other, and the overgrown, absorbing tyranny of Rome; or one of those changes that natural causes alone may produce, in an advancing state of society. But this is to look at it with the eye of worldly reason only, and not of Christian faith. God did employ the kings, and nobles, and scholars to advance the cause, but it was as he overruled the projects of a Cyrus, or Nebuchadnezzar of old, to deliver Zion from her captivity, and re-establish the worship of his own house at Jerusalem. The hand of Him who is "Head over all things to the church, which is his body," gave direction to the conflicting elements, and "made the wrath of man to praise him."

The Protestant Reformation began in the hearts of men. There were many of God's elect on the earth during that generation. The Holy Spirit regenerated, sanctified, and brought them out from their retirements to the public theatre, to do great things for the glory of the Godhead.

Zuingle, Luther, Calvin and Knox, and thousands of others whom that age produced, were, like Barnabas of old, "good men, and full of the Holy Ghost." They drank deep at the fountain of God's most holy word; they enjoyed a double portion of his Spirit; they loved prayer, and found in it their strength and consolation; they conversed with their Maker as a man converses with his friend, and they gave themselves without reserve to the promotion of His cause. Preaching the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, and exemplifying in their practice the truths they proclaimed, God the Redeemer made them his instruments for reviving the true religion in the earth. "The word of God had free course among the nations, and was glorified." Antichrist received a wound from which he has never yet recovered; and the pure light of gospel truth, under whose radiance we are now sitting, burst forth upon the world. The necessity of a personal, spiritual religion, to bless and save man, was fully and successfully demonstrated.

What, then, is Protestantism? It is Christianity, stripped of the corruptions of the Papacy, and coming to man to give him the Bible, and his liberty. The true religion, delivered from the dungeon where Rome had bound and hidden her, and again introduced to men, that they may be reformed and saved.

Popery is but a novelty, not yet twelve hundred and sixty years of age. But Protestantism is as old as the first promise in

which the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to fallen man.

We now proceed to inquire, what is our present duty, as Protestants, to our religion, our country, and the world? It is,

1. *To continue our protest, with firmness and decision, against the Roman Catholic system.*

The ancient enemy is still in the field, with all his former craft and industry, if not with his former power, and his aim is nothing short of a recovery of his lost dominion.

It is the opinion of many of our best expositors of Scripture prophecy, that Popery will recover a temporary ascendancy over the entire seat of its former triumph, before its final destruction; and the sentiment is every day gaining ground throughout Protestant Europe. That it is aiming at this, can hardly be matter of doubt. Within a few years, there has been a remarkable revival of the energies of the Romanists, scattered among various nations; and means have been used to promote a correspondence among them, and concert of action in carrying out the schemes devised at Rome. In the year 1822, the "Society for propagating the faith" was organized in Austria, with the express design of counteracting Protestant missions, and checking the progress of Protestant principles. In the year 1841, its revenue was more than half a million of dollars, and it has announced its intention to carry it to more than two millions annually. With these, and similar means gathered from other quarters, and by other societies, the Papacy has diffused its principles over much of Europe, Asia, Africa, and our own country. Into these lands it has sent its hundreds of Jesuit priests, with

its journals and tracts. It has established schools, colleges, and nunneries, and received in doing all this, the unequivocal countenance of several of the European governments. We see Algiers subdued by the arms of France, and soon a Bishop is sent there to establish the Popish religion. The Sandwich Islands receive the gospel from Protestant missionaries, and Romish priests are forced upon them at the mouth of French cannon. And no sooner is China opened to Christian civilisation, in the overruling providence of God, than the Pope prepares to send his Jesuits among its inhabitants.

In France, Austria, Belgium, and several of the cantons of Switzerland, Popery is greatly on the advance, while the rapid increase of its influence in the British Empire is becoming matter of profound alarm. A recent writer in England,* himself a member of its established church, thus declares his sentiments on this subject. "Hence the rapid spread of Papal principles through our own country, once above all others distinguished for its righteous abhorrence of the apostacy. We must not conceal from ourselves the fact, that even zealous Protestant ministers have become priests of the apostacy; that our own government supports in its colonies the priesthood of the mother of abominations; that our system of national education in Ireland is based on a union of effort with the popish priest; that Jesuit priests* and missionaries, papist churches, seminaries, nunneries, magazines and tracts, are multiplying; and that the college of Maynooth, with all its proved evil system of instruction, receives its yearly thousands from the government. Nor is this, alas!

* Rev. E. Bickersteth, reviewed by London Christian Observer, Feb., 1843.

all. There is a corresponding movement even within our own Protestant Church, in all points in the dangerous direction of Romanism.”

All this shows that Rome is awake, and that she is determined to put forth a mighty effort to regain the mastery of the world. And there is every reason to fear that she will be successful. If, however, in her final struggle, she should slay the witnesses, as predicted in the eleventh chapter of the Revelations, revolutionize the kingdoms of Europe, and resume her despotic sway over the entire surface of the ancient Roman empire, it will be only for a little season. Her speedy downfall will give rest to the Church.

But to come nearer home. It is a question of moment, and we rejoice that it is agitated,—what is the specific danger to our own Republic from the efforts of the Papacy? Shall Rome in any contingency obtain *political ascendancy* here? She cannot, without an entire revolution in our government. Is she able to effect this? That she is attempting it we cannot doubt.

Already we have a million and a half of Papists in the United States, with nearly six hundred officiating priests, and the number is daily increasing. They have an ample supply of money from the foreign treasuries, and they act together as one man. The sympathies of the foreign Romanists are strongly with them; they have the countenance of the old European despots, who hate our free republic, and would fain take away its liberty; and the Pope is the common head and centre of union to the entire body. That Popery is essentially the same thing here, as elsewhere, and as it has always been, we have a right to assume, at least until the Romanists of this country declare the contrary, by some

authoritative act. But they have never so declared. Their boast is, that their system is “*semper et ubique eadem*,” always and everywhere the same. If it be changed, let us see the evidence. If there be improvement, we shall rejoice, for against that we are not contending.

Here, too, the Romanists enjoy the same civil and political rights which are accorded to other American citizens, and they may wield the power of numbers, so far as they possess it, even now, to accomplish any object, not palpably of a revolutionary character. On the fair lands of our Confederacy, Rome has set her eye, with the determination to secure them as her own. We believe she will be disappointed. And, without referring to other considerations, we rest the opinion on the word of God itself. As we understand the predictions of Scripture referring to this subject, they represent the *temporal power* of the Papacy as confined within specific boundaries. The mystical Babylon has its streets and walls, and where, and what they are, may be known by adverting to the condition of the nations, when the “whole world wondered after the Beast.” They are commensurate with the old Roman empire.* And if the power of the Pope, as a *temporal prince*, is extended elsewhere, it is in the same way that the home government of a country extends its authority over its subjects in foreign lands.

We are aware that in the southern portion of our own continent, Rome, in several places, has great influence. But there, revolution succeeds revolution, from year to year, and the poli-

* Rev. xi. 3-8, xiv. 8-20, xvi. 1-19, et cetera.

tical government is perpetually changing. Had the Pope political power, there would be no change. An immutable despotism would prevail. God overrules the changes to prevent Antichrist from settling himself on this continent, as a permanent temporal prince. Out of the territory of the "Roman latin earth," the papacy cannot, we believe, have any permanent political ascendancy. Our own country forms no part of the ancient Roman empire. Here the streets of the mystical Babylon do not extend. She has never given her power to the Beast, as is said of the kings of "the earth." The Declaration of Independence dissolved whatever connection she may have had with the anti-christian world, as colonies of England. And the established policy of her government, under all administrations, is non-interference with European politics, and the permission of no interference with her own. "America," (says Dr. M'Leod, in his tenth lecture on the prophecies), "has not been guilty of shedding the blood of the martyrs. She has not persecuted the wandering and benighted sons of Abraham, still beloved for the Father's sake, and again to be brought back to the knowledge of the truth. She has not, either by sea or by land, encouraged oppression, or despoiled of his goods, him that was at peace with her. This hitherto happy land has been a place of refuge from the storm which desolates the old world. Long may it retain its character! Let its door of hospitality be open for the reception of the stranger, who sighs for a participation in the blessings of liberty enjoyed by the sons of Columbia! And let the republican banner cover as a mantle, and continue to protect its adopted citizen against the unholy claims, and un-

blessed pretensions of perpetual allegiance to despotic power !” Here, then, it is our conviction, that Antichrist shall not reign. The period of twelve hundred and sixty years to which his dominion has been limited, draws towards its close. And when the mystical Babylon falls, it is not to be rebuilt in some other portion of the globe, but to rise no more for ever.

And suppose we are mistaken as to the import of prophecy. Before Popery can triumph here, its votaries must multiply by millions. They must obtain a numerical majority at the polls. They must succeed in extinguishing the lights of liberty, and of the true religion in the tens of thousands of hearts in which they now burn and shine. And they must drive into infidelity, or utter superstition, the daily increasing millions which compose the Protestant Churches, all united in their opposition to Rome.

And is the world to lose its memory of what Popery is, and has done to oppress and destroy ? No ! we may become a nation of infidels, if God do not in mercy prevent ; but a colony of Rome ! No, never !! There is not time for such radical changes as all this supposes, amidst the lights of the 19th century, before the days of Rome shall be numbered.

And let it be remembered, that the revolutions which we believe are to take place in the old world where Popery will triumph for a season, are for the purpose of preparing the way for the extension of the gospel over all the earth. The breaking down of the old and tottering fabrics of Mohammedan and papal tyranny, is to be immediately followed by the building up of the millennial city. Supposing then, that Popery in its final struggle should be able to revolutionize our government into a papal

despotism, it would only be that it might be speedily revolutionized back again into a more thoroughly christianized republic. We had rather say, that being radically right in its foundation, God will reform, sustain, and save it.

Are we, then, in no danger from Popery? Undoubtedly we are, and we should not be insensible to it. It will in all probability be employed, as a rod in the hand of God, to chastise this nation for its sins. We are already finding it a great disturbing force in the Commonwealth, agitating perpetually, and jeopardizing its prosperity.

We are in danger from popery, *first*, because it will interfere with, and attempt to destroy our established systems of education. These generally embrace the Scriptures, in some form or other, and have done so since the first settlement of the country, unless where a popish or infidel influence had prevailed. Take away the principles of Bible morality from a system of education, and the education will be infidel. Popery hates and opposes the Bible, and will seek, as she has already done, to banish it from the common schools. To do this is to strike at the foundations of our government. No community is capable of self-government whose individual members are not themselves governed by the morals of the Bible. Nor is this all. Increasing in their demands for change in the system of education, the Romish prelates of New York, Pennsylvania, and New England, feel themselves sufficiently strong to require that all references unfavorable to Popery be banished from the histories and other books of instruction. The history of Popery is the history of the world for many ages. And here the design is apparent. They would wish to bring up the coming generation in ignorance of the

misdeeds of Rome. But the attempt will be abortive. In some way or other, the memory of the world's oppressor for centuries must be perpetuated. Americans must not forget the reasons and influences of the Protestant Reformation. Popery, too, opposes our system of common school instruction, because its tendency is to break down all sectional and foreign feeling, and amalgamate all into one mass, as American citizens. She loves the special privileges of despotism, and therefore opposes the common school. Contact with Protestants is unfavorable to Romanism.

A *second danger* to our country from popish influence, is its tendency to promote corruption in the exercise of the elective franchise. Already Romanists are sufficiently numerous in some parts of the Union, to hold the balance of power between political parties. This is an encouragement to unprincipled politicians to court their favor, and offer them inducements to join their ranks, while it furnishes occasion to them to demand special favors for themselves. Here, then, is a grand corrupting influence, cutting deep into the vitals of our political system.

But *third*, and this is the grand evil which we find ourselves compelled to charge on the papal system:—Its efforts will be employed to counteract the influence of the Church in giving pure religion to the people. It should be the aim of the Church, as she would desire to save the Republic, to bring the mass of the people under the influence of the gospel; to sanctify the public mind and heart, and, looking to the eternal world, give all her energies to the work of bringing sinners to Jesus Christ. In this she may expect to find Popery a grand opponent. And thus Popery may ruin many immortal souls, by persuading them

to receive her wretched formalism, instead of the living spiritualities of the gospel of the Son of God.

Here, then, is ample reason for continuing a firm and intelligent protest against her.

Let her errors and superstitions be exposed, in the spirit of Christian candor and love ; let the Bible be circulated among her votaries ; let her children be taken by the hand, and brought to the sabbath school and Church of God ; let her votaries be entreated, in the spirit of the Gospel, to come out of the mystical Babylon, and let the Church wrestle with the Mediatorial Angel in fervent and effectual prayer for the reformation of her deluded people ; in a word, let Protestants do their duty to themselves, their country, and their God, and Rome shall never have the Republic.

But 2. And to conclude : *The present duty of Protestants is to prosecute reform wherever it is seen to be necessary.*

The grand difference between our civil institutions and those of the old world generally is, that ours are founded in right, and that their evils are rather incidental than constitutional and necessary, while the opposite is the case with governments abroad. What is radically right, though imperfect, and liable to abuse, may be reformed and saved, in the use of the proper means. It behooves all who love their country, to know its evils, and seek their removal. That great and growing evils do exist in our social system is undoubtedly true. Thus, if we look in one direction, we behold the system of slavery, that grand criminal inconsistency with all our professions as a free people. This is the sin and shame of our country, and must be removed, if God designs our institutions for permanency.

And again, we see a rancorous party spirit, in the management of politics, which sacrifices everything at the shrine of its own selfishness, and tramples moral principles to the earth.

Another evil is the spirit of insubordination which is felt in all departments of society, and threatens the destruction of all authority.

And another is the increasing disposition to think lightly of crime. Hence the disregard of the obligation of contracts; the connivance at fraud in individuals and communities; the extreme difficulty of bringing the transgressors of law to punishment, and the frequent and unjustifiable exercise of the pardoning power, under the influence of a wrongly-directed sympathy. But without attempting a further enumeration of existing evils we may sum up all in one—*disregard for the law of God*. Here is the grand source of our danger. Our tendencies, as a people, are to a profligate infidelity. Respect for the Bible is the palladium of our liberties. On no other foundation can our Republic stand. The true Protestant is pledged to be a Reformer. And when we point to the evils that exist, we also put the remedy in the hand. It is found in the Bible—Jesus Christ is the Prince of the Kings of the earth, and his law the universal rule for individual and social man, in all his relations; and there is no security for the individual, or the community, but in friendship with Him, through submission to his law.

“Be wise now, therefore, oh ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth; Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling: Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”—PSALM ii., 10-12. Our hope for our country, under God, is in his Church,—the

Protestant Church of our land, catholic in her sympathies and claims, and one in her love to the pure word of God. She is the salt and the light to our constantly increasing population. Healing her own divisions, understanding her character, and combining her efforts against the common enemy, let her be true to herself, and our country is safe.

Let Bible principles be taught in the schools of the Republic; let them be revered in her halls of legislation; let them actuate her public servants in the judicial and executive departments of her government; let her pulpits continue to proclaim, and with increased efficiency, the glorious truths of the gospel of Christ—in a word, let the mass of the population be true to their Protestant origin, and she will stand upon a rock which cannot be moved, when the storm of revolution shall sweep the mystical Babylon from the earth, and those mighty despotisms of another continent which now support her, shall crumble into ruin. Antichrist shall ere long fall, and Protestantism, which is Christianity, pervade and bless the world. “And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.”—REVELATIONS xi., 15.

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